



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIXTH ORDINARY ASSEMBLY
OF THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM OF CATHOLIC ACTION**

To my Venerable Brother

Bishop DOMENICO SIGALINI

General Chaplain of the International Forum of Catholic Action

On the occasion of the Sixth Ordinary Assembly of this International Forum of Catholic Action I wish to address a cordial greeting to you and to all who are taking part in this important meeting. I greet in particular Emilio Inzaurraga, the Coordinator of the Secretariat, the National Presidents and the Chaplains. I address a special thought to Bishop Petru Gherghel of Iași, and to his diocese, hosting this ecclesial event at which you are called to reflect on “ecclesial and social co-responsibility”. This is a topic of great importance to the laity that fits in well with the upcoming Year of Faith and the Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization.

Co-responsibility demands a change in mindset especially concerning the role of lay people in the Church. They should not be regarded as “collaborators” of the clergy, but, rather, as people who are really “co-responsible” for the Church’s being and acting. It is therefore important that a mature and committed laity be consolidated, which can make its own specific contribution to the ecclesial mission with respect for the ministries and tasks that each one has in the life of the Church and always in cordial communion with the bishops.

In this regard the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* describes the style of relations between lay people and pastors with the adjective “familiar”: “Many benefits for the Church are to be expected from this familiar relationship between the laity and the pastors. The sense of their own responsibility is strengthened in the laity, their zeal is encouraged, they are more ready to unite their energies to the work of their pastors. The latter, helped by the experience of the laity, are in a position to judge more clearly and more appropriately in spiritual as well as in temporal matters. Strengthened by all her members, the Church can thus more effectively fulfil her mission for the

life of the world” (n. 37).

Dear friends it is important to study in depth and to live in the Church this spirit of profound communion, characteristic of the beginnings of the Christian community, as attested by the Acts of the Apostles: “The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul” (4:32).

May you feel as your own the commitment to working for the Church’s mission: with prayers, study and active participation in ecclesial life, with an attentive and positive gaze at the world, in the constant search for the signs of the times. Through a serious and daily commitment to formation never tire of increasingly refining the aspects of your specific vocation as lay faithful called to be courageous and credible witnesses in all social milieus so that the Gospel may be a light that brings hope to the problematic, difficult and dark situations which people today often encounter in their journey through life.

Guiding people to the encounter with Christ, proclaiming his Message of salvation in languages and ways understandable to our time, marked by social and cultural processes in rapid transformation, is the great challenge of the new evangelization. I encourage you to persevere generously in your service to the Church. Live to the full your charism which consists in taking on the apostolic aim of the Church in its entirety, in a fruitful balance between the universal Church and the local Church and in a spirit of close union with the Successor of Peter and active co-responsibility with your own Pastors (cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 20).

In this phase of history, in the light of the Church’s social Magisterium also strive to be, increasingly, a laboratory of the “globalization of solidarity and charity”, so as to grow, with the whole Church, in the co-responsibility of offering humanity a future of hope and with the courage to formulate demanding proposals. Your Associations of Catholic Action boast a long and fruitful history, written by courageous witnesses of Christ and of the Gospel. The Church has recognized some of them as Blesseds and Saints. Following in their footsteps, you are called today to renew your commitment to walking on the way of holiness, keeping up your intense life of prayer, encouraging and respecting personal ways of faith and making the most of the riches of each one, with the guidance of your priest-chaplains and those in charge who can teach ecclesial and social co-responsibility. May your life be “transparent”, orientated by the Gospel and illumined by the encounter with Christ, loved and followed without fear. Make your own and share the pastoral decisions of the dioceses and parishes, fostering opportunities for meeting and for sincere collaboration with the other members of the ecclesial community, creating relations of esteem and communion with priests for a lively ministerial and missionary community. Cultivate authentic personal relations with everyone, starting with the family, and offer your readiness to participate at all the levels of social, cultural and political life, constantly aiming for the common good.

With these brief thoughts, as I assure you of my affectionate remembrance in prayer, for you

yourselves, for your families and for your associations, I warmly impart to all the participants in the Assembly my Apostolic Blessing, which I gladly extend to those you meet in your daily apostolate.

From Castel Gandolfo, 10 August 2012.

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